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A POPULIST MONOMYTH: The Hero's Journey and the Cosmogonic Cycle in the Writings of Ignatius Donnelly, 1880s–1890s

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Introduction

Besides his fame as a popularizer of myth, Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) is widely considered to have employed a Jungian approach to mythology. Thus, Tigue's psychological interpretation of myths draws upon both Jung and Campbell.¹ However, while acknowledging Campbell's intellectual debt to Jung, Segal points towards a number of important differences between them. For example, while Jung recommends striking a balance between the everyday world and the unconscious, Campbell discounts the former in favour of a mystical ultimate reality.² Finally, Rensma distinguishes between three phases of Campbell's reception of Jung: an early phase, in which Campbell refers to both Freud and Jung; a middle one, in which he turns away from Jung; and a late one, in which Campbell explicitly endorses a Jungian perspective.³ Be that as it may, it is fair to say that a

¹ John W. Tigue, *The Transformation of Consciousness in Myth: Integrating the Thought of Jung and Campbell*, New York: Peter Lang, 1994.

² Robert A. Segal, *Joseph Campbell: An Introduction* (1987), New York: Mentor, pp. 26–71, 244–263.

³ Ritske Rensma, *The Innateness of Myth: A New Interpretation of Joseph Campbell's Reception of C.G. Jung*, London and New York: Continuum, 2009.

familiarity with Jung's conceptual apparatus is useful in both understanding and fruitfully employing Campbell's approach to mythology.

Campbell's mythological classic *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), in which he introduces the concept of the Monomyth, is no longer considered cutting-edge in literary criticism and history of religion. It was never highly valued among most anthropologists and folklorists in the first place.⁴ But it continues to exert a strong influence over popular culture. The most prominent instance is the *Star Wars* saga, whose creator George Lucas has been – or at least claims to have been – influenced by Campbell's work.⁵ In the following pages, I intend to show that two monomythical motifs identified by Campbell, that is the hero's journey and the cosmogonic cycle, already appear in some of the works of another representative of popular culture.

The author in question here is Ignatius Donnelly, who was one of leaders of a late-19th century U.S. agrarian reform movement known as the Populists. Besides his activities as political leader, Donnelly was a prolific writer, penning down a number of amateur scientific tracts as well as what we would today call Science Fiction/Fantasy novels. It is in these bodies of work that the Campbellian monomythical motifs figure prominently. The case of Donnelly's work thus provides a further instance demonstrating the relevance of Campbell's mythology, at least in the field of popular culture. It however also opens up a question: While Campbell understands both the Hero's Journey and the Cosmogonic Cycle in psychological and metaphysical terms, Donnelly employs them in a quite literal way and for the purpose of advancing his Populist political agenda. But if, as Campbell would have it, myth is about one's spiritual development, how can it be turned into a political message directed at the public? It is here where Jung comes in. I will argue that Donnelly's books represent a case of a distinctively modern myth, not unlike the UFO phenomenon as discussed by Jung in one of his latest works.

The argument will proceed in four steps. First, the two major monomythical motifs of *The Hero* are discussed. The second step sets the stage by providing a brief summary of Donnelly's life and of the Populists, that is the political movement he stood for. Being the core of the argument, part three discusses five books published by Donnelly during the 1880s and 1890s, thereby tracing out the monomythical motifs contained in these works. In the last step, these findings will be interpreted in line with Jung's ideas on modern myth.

Joseph Campbell and the Monomyth

In his early and most famous monography, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell draws attention to the similarity between myths from all over the world. In addition, many mythical motives appear in dreams as analyzed by contemporary psychologists. On the base of these similarities, he identifies a universal mythical narrative, which – borrowing the term from James Joyce – he calls the *Monomyth*.⁶

At the core of this Monomyth is the *Hero's Journey*, which symbolizes a person's spiritual development of getting in touch with the unconscious. It is structured around a threefold pattern of separation, initiation and return. Living his everyday life, the hero receives a call to adventure, which – after initial rejection – he takes up with the help of a supernatural guide and/or a magical object. Crossing a threshold, sometimes over the opposition of a guardian, the hero gets separated from the everyday world. Like Jonas, he enters “the belly of the whale”. The hero finds himself in an unusual surrounding, say, a magical forest or a haunted castle, which corresponds to one's unconscious. There, he undergoes a number of dangerous trials. Having successfully passed these tests, he meets

⁴ Robert Ellwood, *The Politics of Myth: A Study of C.G. Jung, Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999, pp. 142–145.

⁵ Mary Henderson, *Star Wars: The Magic of Myth*, New York: Bantam, 1997, pp. 7, 12; Paul F. McDonald, *The Star Wars Heresies: Interpreting the Themes, Symbols and Philosophies of Episodes I, II and III*, Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 2013, pp. 3f.

⁶ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), 3rd ed., Novato, CA: New World Library, pp. 1–37.

the mother–goddess (or, alternatively, has to resist the advances of a temptress) or his own, god–like father, who might have some demonic aspects but with whom he ultimately gets atoned. The hero may also experience an apotheosis, that is becoming a quasi–god recognizing the oneness of everything and thereby overcoming all contradictory principles (male–female, death–birth, truth–illusoriness, etc.). These adventures lead to the gaining of a boon in the shape of a magical object, esoteric knowledge or useful skill. After some hesitation, the hero leaves the magical world, sometimes by escaping with the help of supernatural means (the magic flight) and/or being rescued by a helper from outside. Having crossed the return threshold, the hero goes back to the everyday surroundings but has been personally transformed by the experience. This enables him to bestow upon his community the boon of the mystery environment, thereby easily living in both the everyday and the mystery realms (master of two worlds). Being at one with the eternal and released from everyday concerns, he enjoys “freedom to live”.⁷

Campbell supplements this account of the Hero’s Journey with one about the *Cosmogonic Cycle*. While there are frequent references to psychoanalysis in the section on the Hero, this second part of the book turns more to metaphysical speculation. For Campbell, the Monomyth reflects the doctrine that everything is ultimately rooted in a unitary power, out of which phenomena manifest themselves and into which they ultimately dissolve again. Thus, he puts three cycles into parallel: First, the universe and its lifeforms emanate out of a void, thereby leading to the separation of the primordial unity into several elements. In time, the universe undergoes a process of decline, which ends in its cataclysmic dissolution to be followed by a renewed creation. The second cycle is about the hero. The divine or semi–divine beings that play a leading role at the beginning of the universe give way to heroes with a human character. Just like the universe emerges out of the void, the hero is often being born by a virgin. Having taken up different roles during his life, the hero ultimately submits to death or disappears, thereby entering a transformed state. Third, there is the individual’s experience of going from deep sleep through dream to awakeness and back.⁸

Campbell ends his mythological *tour de force* by emphasizing the ongoing relevance of myth for modern man cut off from the larger group by individualism.⁹ Although he presents a battery of mythical tales to illustrate the Hero’s Journey and the Cosmogonic Cycle, none of them contains all the steps listed here. Thus, the monomythical narratives as envisaged by Campbell should best be considered as an ideal–typical model.

U.S. Populist: Ignatius Donnelly

Let us leave the Monomyth for the time being and turn to the U.S. Populists: the cooperative Farmers’ Alliance of the second half of the 1880s and the People’s Party of the 1890s, both of which arose in response to the problems of low growth, price decline and debt burdens in an agrarian sector increasingly integrated into the world economy. The strongholds of the Populists were the cotton–producing South and certain wheat–growing states in the plains Midwest, plus silver–mining Rocky Mountains states. The Populists found their core supporters among (usually white) farmers but the movement also tried to reach out to urban workers and middle–class intellectuals as well as to Black fellow–farmers.

To ease the burden of the indebted farmers and to raise agricultural prices, the Populists called for inflationary monetary politics. This would have meant dropping the gold standard in favour of either printing more paper money (Greenbackism) or putting the more easily available silver on par with gold (Bimetallism). Other demands catering for farmer interests included federal credit and marketing facilities, measures against land speculation, and public regulation or outright ownership of railways and telecommunications. The Populist agenda also called for pro–labour legislation, a

⁷ Ibid., pp. 41–215.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 219–327.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 329–337.

progressive income tax, removal of protective tariffs, and political reforms like popular elections of U.S. Senators. Despite enjoying strong support within the movement, voting rights for women and prohibition of alcoholic drinks were not included into the official platforms.

Populism reached its apogee in 1892, when the candidate of the People's Party gained a respectable 8.5% of the popular vote in the Presidential elections. About that time, there were also several Populist state governors and U.S. Congress members. Subsequently, the Populists tried to broaden their appeal by emphasizing the issue of Bimetallism at the expense of their remaining agenda. In 1896, the People's Party endorsed the candidacy of the Bimetallist Democrat William Jennings Bryan for President. After the Republican "goldbug" William McKinley triumphed over this Democratic–Populist fusion ticket, the movement lost its momentum.

The legacy of the Populists is controversial. While Hofstadter considers their agrarian agenda as backward-looking and charges them of anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant and Jingoist views,¹⁰ more recent historians interpret the Populists as a progressive political force.¹¹ Related to this controversy is the contemporary discussion whether Trump can be considered to be an heir of the Populists or whether he rather stands for everything the Populists were opposed to.¹² This article is not the place to enter into that specific discussion. However, we will see presently that Donnelly's work indeed provides for a good dose of both racism and anti-Semitism.

The parents of Ignatius Donnelly were first- and second-generation Irish immigrants. Having been trained as a lawyer, Donnelly moved to the then frontier state of Minnesota during the late 1850s. There, he co-managed a new township development scheme, which faltered when the economic boom turned into bust in 1858. The venture left Donnelly with both extensive landholdings and debts. He turned towards politics and joined the newly-founded Republican Party. Elected Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota in 1859, he subsequently served as member of the US House of Representatives (1863–1869). After a spell as lobbyist for an Eastern banker, Donnelly re-entered politics, this time for a number of third parties or groups representing the interests of the farmers and workers. Between 1874 and 1878, he was Senator in the Minnesota legislature, supported by parties backed up by the Granger and Greenback movement in coalition with reform-oriented Democrats. Subsequently, the state Farmers' Alliance, of which he was temporarily President, backed his successful bids to the Minnesota lower house (1886) and again the state Senate (1890). During these decades, he also edited two journals, the *Anti-Monopolist* and later the *Representative*. Donnelly was among the founders of the People's Party and had a leading role in putting up its platform. Having been elected on that party's ticket, he served once again in the state lower house (1897–1898). Unenthusiastic about the People's Party's joint ticket with the Democrats during the Presidential elections of 1896, he ran as Vice Presidential candidate for the remnant of the party in 1900.

In addition to these political and journalistic activities, Donnelly was an amateur scientist and a novelist. His oeuvre includes two books arguing that the works attributed to Shakespeare, Marlowe and Montaigne had in reality been written by Francis Bacon, and a tract in favour of Greenbackism and bimetallism.¹³ These, however, are not very relevant for the following discussion. Instead, we will discuss his two studies about pre-historic civilizations as well as his three novels, which all have a fantastic or Science Fiction character.

¹⁰ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.*, New York: Vintage, 1955, S. 23–36, 60–130.

¹¹ Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1976; Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (1998), Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2017, pp. 26–46; Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

¹² Charles Postel, "If Trump and Sanders Are Both Populists, What Does Populist Mean?", *The American Historian*, February 2016, <https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2016/february/if-trump-and-sanders-are-both-populists-what-does-populist-mean>.

¹³ Martin Ridge, *Ignatius Donnelly: The Portrait of a Politician*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Monomythical Elements in the Work of Donnelly

*Atlantis (1882)*¹⁴

Donnelly draws upon geological, archaeological, linguistic, and mythological evidence to argue that Plato's account of Atlantis, an island in the Atlantic Ocean that was destroyed by a great catastrophe, is a historical fact. Existing several thousand years before recorded history, Atlantis was the centre of a civilization with colonies in the lands all around the Atlantic. It was inhabited by three races, excluding the Black one. In the end, geological activities made the island – except for what is now the Azores – sink below the sea level. The survivors were the ancestors of the Ancient civilizations known in history.

Donnelly explicitly characterizes ancient mythical tales as “confused recollection of real historical events” (p. 2). References to Atlantis can be found not only in Plato's text but in a large number of myths. For example, different narratives of a great deluge told by numerous peoples are reports of the actual disaster which destroyed Atlantis while various mythical gods like the Greeks' Poseidon or the Scandinavians' Odin had actually been kings of that island (pp. 65–128, 198–213, 276–316). According to Donnelly, the paradise motif of several myths like that of the Garden of Eden also refer to Atlantis. Indeed, the cross symbol, which appears not only in Christianity but in several other faiths, has its origins in the four rivers mentioned in all these myths; these mythical rivers, in turn, are recollections of real rivers flowing in Atlantis (pp. 1f., 317–330, 467f.). Here, Donnelly follows a practice that is known after its pioneer, a Hellenistic philosopher, as Euhemerism. Shorn of exaggerations and supernatural elements, ancient mythical tales are accounts of past events that really happened and thus can count as valuable historical sources.

Donnelly also uses a mythical narrative to establish a racist claim: Considering the Noah of the *Genesis* a survivor of Atlantis, he argues that the “negro race” is not among his descendants and thus has no connection with this lost civilization (pp. 73, 436f.). This is important because there is an essential division of humanity: On the one hand, there are those capable of civilization, who are all tracing their origins back to Atlantis. On the other hand, there are those who cannot be related to Atlantis and who thus are likely to remain always savages (pp. 133, 426). The implications of this for the people of African origin are quite clear.

In line with his later Populist agenda, Donnelly does not fail to stress on several occasion that the Atlantean civilization was primarily an agricultural one (pp. 22, 24, 141, 474). In addition, the Atlanteans possessed almost all the technology of the modern world, with the exception of printing, steam–power and electricity (p. 478). According to Donnelly's version of the Cosmogonic Cycle, Atlantis fell subject to moral decline due to the intermarriage between superior and inferior races there (p. 73). After the destruction of Atlantis, its inheritors like the people of Ancient Egypt and pre–Columbian Mexico had a civilizational level hardly overtaken there by today (pp. 357, 363). And the successor civilizations failed to substantially surpass the achievements of Atlantis before the 16th or 17th centuries. Only modern man has rekindled the spirit of progress, thereby building upon the foundations laid by the Atlanteans. Ending millennia of stagnation, the present age and its technological invention promises to lift mankind up to a higher level (pp. 130f., 177, 453).

*Ragnarok (1883)*¹⁵

The follow–up volume to the Atlantis story is titled after the name for the end of the world in Norse mythology. Again enlisting a battery of astronomical, geological, archaeological, and especially mythological clues, Donnelly argues for the existence of an even earlier civilization, which was located, among other areas, in North America. This “Pre–Glacial” culture perished about 30,000

¹⁴ Ignatius Donnelly, *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World*, New York: Harper, 1882, <https://ia800903.us.archive.org/3/items/atlantisedilu00donnuoft/atlantisedilu00donnuoft.pdf>.

¹⁵ Ignatius Donnelly, *Ragnarok: The Age of Fire and Gravel* (1883), 11th ed., Chicago: R.S. Peale, 1887.

years ago due to the impact of a comet that crossed Earth's path and caused a massive amount of gravel to fall on its surface. Some people survived and prepared the ground for the successor civilization based in Atlantis.

Again adopting an Euhemerist approach, Donnelly stresses the value of myth as a historical source about the pre-Glacial civilization and its demise (pp. 113–120). A vast number of ancient mythical tales are interpreted as recollections of the cometic impact and its aftermath. For example, the tribulations destroying Job's family and property, the out-of-control chariot of the sun god in the Phaeton narrative of the Ancient Greeks, and the monsters attacking Asgaard in the Nordic myths all refer to the comet; and what appears as the creation of the world in the *Genesis* actually describes the slow recovery of living conditions after the cometic impact (pp. 132–340). With respect to the latter text, Donnelly argues against a too literal reading because of the contradictions contained in the narrative. In contrast, his reinterpretation of the *Genesis* harmonizes it with the findings of science (pp. 317–319). Thus, the six days of creation should neither be understood as actual days nor as vast periods of time; rather, they refer to different stages of the environment's recovery (pp. 335f.). These interpretations go together with an endorsement of the theory of evolution. For Donnelly, the latter is not in contradiction to religion but ultimately rooted in God's purpose (p. 406).

Like Atlantis, the earlier Pre-Glacial civilization is described in terms of a golden age. Due to the mild climate that prevailed on Earth before the comet's impact, Pre-Glacial man lived in "a fair and lovely world [...] a garden, a paradise" (p. 43). The achievements of the Pre-Glacial people included domestication of animals, an alphabet, architecture, money and pottery (p. 341); that is we have here the case of another agricultural civilization. Referring to a variety of mythical accounts, Donnelly draws a narrative leading from a golden age through decline, destruction and renewal (pp. 339f.). He argues that many comets must have crossed Earth's orbit and caused havoc in the past, and that they will continue to do so in the future: "In endless series the ages stretch along – birth, life, development, destruction. And so it shall be till time is no more" (pp. 435f.). In these passages, Donnelly formulates another variety of the Cosmogonic Cycle.

Somewhat in contrast to this cyclical view of history, there is also a more linear and optimistic one. Donnelly repeats the expectation raised in his previous book that humanity will reach higher and higher levels of development. And this does not just mean material aspects, for "who can doubt that the Cain-like in the race will gradually pass away and the Christ-like dominate the planet?" (pp. 406f.) It is here where Donnelly sees the positive aspect of the prehistoric cataclysms: They destroyed only what was not worth preserving and what actually hindered humanity's progress. In this way, these disasters brought mankind to a higher level (pp. 438f.). Thus: "Great races are the weeded-out survivors of great sufferings" (p. 367).

For Donnelly, the cyclical world-view is further tempered by a moralistic message. He takes up the character of the rich man in the *New Testament*, who gets punished for his lack of sympathy with the poor. Here, the rich man is presented as a current Wall Street millionaire who smugly relies upon insurance companies, government protection and his skills as war profiteer but who does not imagine that a cosmic catastrophe might undo all his precautions. But this need not happen. Dropping science for faith, Donnelly asserts that, once humanity is on the road to perfection, God will preserve it from further cometic impacts (pp. 440f.).

*Caesar's Column (1890)*¹⁶

Donnelly's first novel, like its two successors, can be interpreted along the pattern of the Hero's Journey. Here, the mystical realm is the New York of 1888. The initially naive hero, Gabriel Weltstein, comes from a bucolic (and apparently white) settlement in Uganda. The futuristic city is

¹⁶ Ignatius Donnelly [pseud.: Edmund Boisgilbert], *Caesar's Column: A Story of the Twentieth Century*, London, New York and Melbourne: Ward, Lock, s.a. [1890].

full of technological marvels, including what one might interpret as a kind of internet. (Personal transport, however, still relies upon horse-drawn carriages.) Gabriel's call to adventure starts once he saves the life of the second hero, Maximilian Petion, who takes him to his home and introduces him to the realities of late 20th century North America and Europe (crossing the threshold). A group of – mainly Jewish – plutocrats rules with an iron fist while the bulk of the population lives in misery. Maximilian, who belongs to a triumvirate leading a revolutionary secret society, takes Gabriel to – as the respective chapter is entitled – “The Under-World”, in which the oppressed workers live (the belly of the whale). Next follows the road of trials: Gabriel is smuggled into the home of the plutocrats' leader, where the latter holds a fair girl captive. Gabriel liberates the girl and also gains information about the plutocratic council's sinister plans to crush the impending revolution. Having made his escape, he passes the information to the revolutionary triumvirate, which prepares measures to foil the plans of the plutocrats. Afterwards, Maximilian finds time enough to save another damsel in distress; both his and Gabriel's girl-friend are courageous young women of high moral character (meeting the goddess). Finally, the long-prepared revolution breaks out and leads to the massacre of the plutocrats and their followers. Maximilian uses the opportunity to free his unjustly imprisoned father and to take revenge upon the guilty ones (reunion, rather than atonement, with the father). Among orgies of violence and destruction, the revolutionary mobs finally turn against their own leaders when one member of the revolutionary triumvirate – again, a Jew – misappropriates a large sum of money and escapes to Palestine. In the absence of any orderly government, Western civilization collapses and falls back into an age of barbarism. Gabriel collects the literary and technological artefacts of modern civilization (ultimate boon). He, Maximilian and their beloved ones escape the burning city by dirigible (magical flight), fly over an equally destruction-ravaged Europe and then turn towards the peaceful Sahara (crossing the return threshold). The novel ends with an account of the utopian community the two friends have helped to set up in Africa. It is a mixture of a capitalist and a socialist society and thus eschews the extremes, that is plutocracy and violent revolution, which brought down the futuristic New York. Here, the two heroes have achieved an apotheosis in the sense of moving beyond contradictory principles.

There are also some brief references to the Cosmogonic Cycle and the lost agrarian arcadia. The farmers of the early USA, who fought in the American Revolution and the Civil War, are dubbed an “honest yeomanry”. Alas, their 20th century descendants have become an oppressed and brutalized peasantry (p. 218). The cruel leader of the revolutionary triumvirate once was a virtuous farmer until he got ensnared by the debt trap (pp. 93f.). After the revolutionary cataclysm, which disposes of the heartless plutocrats, civilization is given a new chance in remote Africa. At one passage, the connection with the previous disasters is explicitly drawn: “It may be God's way of wiping off the blackboard. It may be that the ancient legends of the destruction of our race by flood and fire are but dim remembrances of events like that which is now happening” (pp. 226f.). Maximilian expects that, in time, civilization will recover – until the next cataclysm strikes. In the thought of this new civilization, the rulers of the previous one, that is ours, will have been transformed into gods (p. 226), just as it previously happened with Atlantis.

*Doctor Huguet (1891)*¹⁷

Donnelly's next novel is set in contemporary South Carolina. Arthur Huguet is a bookish man of wealth, who through the help of his fiancée's father aspires a political career. He however makes himself unpopular with the local elite due to his views on the race issue. While maintaining the notion of white supremacy, he holds up the possibility that Black people may in time rise to a higher level. Arthur's fiancée Mary urges him never again to voice these sentiments lest he ruins his career

¹⁷ Ignatius Donnelly [pseud.: Edmund Boisgilbert], *Doctor Huguet: A Novel*, Chicago: F.J. Schulte, 1891, <https://ia802703.us.archive.org/23/items/doctorhuguetnove00donniala/doctorhuguetnove00donniala.pdf>.

prospects. Arthur hesitates for a moment but then agrees to hide his convictions from now on (refusal of the call). At night, he has a dream vision of Jesus (crossing the threshold). When he wakes up, he finds himself in the body of a Black petty criminal while the soul of the Black man has entered Arthur's body. There follows the road of trials: Arthur's attempts to convince the local townspeople of his true identity fail and he gets a taste of how Black people are being treated by the white authorities. He almost gets lynched when he – apparently a Black man – tries to approach Mary. Only his personal servant and Mary's illegitimate cousin Abigail – who as a despised mulatto is in a situation remotely similar to Arthur – believe him. They support Arthur as much as they can and, towards the end of the novel, sacrifice their lives for him (supernatural aid). After a spell in prison and a prolonged illness, things improve to the degree that Mary gets convinced that he really is Arthur in another man's body. Having accepted his fate as punishment for his previous lack of moral backbone, Arthur sets up a successful school educating the local Black people. His good work among the Blacks arises the ire of some white ruffians, among them the Black criminal in Arthur's body. When Arthur bravely refuses to submit to their threats, they attack the school and the criminal shoots him. Arthur's previous spinlessness having been forgiven due to his subsequent behavior (atonement with the father, i.e. here God), in that instance the exchange of souls is reversed. Arthur wakes up in his own body (crossing the return threshold). In the meanwhile, the decent folks among the white community go after the ruffians. At end of the novel, having learned their lesson, Arthur and Mary promise to devote their lives to the uplift of the Black people (ultimate boon). Having had the experience of living both in a white and black skin, Arthur is master of two worlds. His apotheosis consists in the awareness that all humans regardless of race are God's children.

The Golden Bottle (1892)¹⁸

Having given the South its due, Donnelly centres his third novel around a Midwestern hero, Ephraim Benezet, who belongs to a poor farming family. The family faces the impending foreclosure of its property, a situation which puts him into an embittered mood (call to adventure). Once Ephraim has fallen asleep (crossing the threshold), he dreams that he is given a bottle that can turn everything into gold, thus making him the world's richest man (supernatural aid). There follows the road of trials: Escaping jealous neighbours and disgruntled local businessmen, Ephraim provides cheap credit to the indebted farmers and establishes a cooperative for working women. In between, he rescues his virtuous and spirited childhood love Sophie. As his wife, Sophie is the one who finds the means to overcome many of the trials Ephraim is facing (meeting the goddess). There is, however, no atonement with the father; on the contrary, Ephraim's father misuses the newly-found riches for money-lending and thus earns his son's stern rebuke. Next, over the opposition of the plutocracy as well as the politicians and journalists in their pockets, Ephraim terminates the USA's deflationary policies and gets himself elected president. Waging a successful military campaign against the European monarchies, President Benezet liberates Europe from aristocratic rule and establishes a world government arbitrating inter-state conflicts (apotheosis in the sense of overcoming political borders). As if making amends for the anti-Semitism of *Caesar's Column*, he hands over Palestine to the Jews, who are now praised for their monotheism. Finally, the glorious dream ends and Ephraim wakes up to face the dreary reality again (crossing the return threshold). He feels desperate, but then has the vision of a ghost (rescue from without), who advises him to work in order to put the dream vision into practice (ultimate boon). In having had the dream vision of a better world and, at the same time, continuing to live in the more mundane reality, Ephraim has become master of two worlds.

The motif of the lost agrarian arcadia appears once more. Originally, the USA was a farmers' republic raising brave men and heroic women. But since the end of the Civil War, when the USA

¹⁸ Ignatius Donnelly, *The Golden Bottle; or, The Story of Ephraim Benezet of Kansas*. New York and St. Paul: D.D. Merrill, 1892, <https://ia800902.us.archive.org/33/items/goldenbottleorst00donniala/goldenbottleorst00donniala.pdf/>.

had been the world's most prosperous country, things went awry. Tight monetary policies produced simultaneously the rise of Dollar and the decline of the people. The farmers' share of the national wealth declined drastically, leaving them in the position of oppressed tenants (pp. 126f., 142). In contrast to *Caesar's Column*, this period of decline does not lead to a world-wide disaster; instead, President Benezet restores arcadia. However, Ephraim uses an apocalyptic image when he enthuses about the heroic exploits of his Sophie during the war in Europe: "Yes! A Yankee woman had won Armageddon! A Western girl had achieved the Millennium!" (p. 263).

Linking the novel with Donnelly's pseudo-scientific works, there are some cameo mentionings of Atlantis (pp. 126, 129f., 136, 266, 274f., 308). There is also a brief repetition of a topic from *Ragnarok*: Mankind has tremendously advanced since the Stone Age; and its machines are more perfect than animals created by nature. But there remains the possibility that all this, including the utopian global order established by Ephraim, will one day succumb to a cosmic catastrophe (pp. 277, 311–313). Again, Donnelly here refers to the Cosmogonic Cycle.

Enter Jung: Modern Myth

As the above analysis has aimed to show, Donnelly's amateur scientific and novelistic works make extensive use of two monomythical motifs, that is the Hero's Journey and the Cosmogonic Cycle. Furthermore, Donnelly employs these motifs already more than half a century before Campbell popularizes them in *The Hero*. This is perhaps not too surprising, given the fact that Donnelly – as becomes obvious in the two books on pre-historical civilizations – possesses extensive knowledge of myths from all over the world. Still, he is no proto-Campbell. His Euhemerist and literal approach to myth would have been anathema to the later writer. For Campbell, myth is to be read symbolically and represents a person's spiritual development leading to a reconnection with the unconscious and to the awareness that, ultimately, All is One.

Consequently, both writers contextualize their mythical tales very differently in terms of time: For Donnelly, they are either events that took place some thousand (*Atlantis*) and ten thousand years ago (*Ragnarok*) or fictitious events that might happen in the world of present South Carolina (*Doctor Huguet*), the USA and Europe in the very near future (*The Golden Bottle*) and the New York of hundred years hence (*Caesar's Column*). There are some supernatural elements, i.e. the exchange of souls and the gold-producing bottle, but the bulk of Donnelly's scientific and novelistic narrative refers to the real world of the past or future. In contrast, the monomythical motifs Campbell presents in *The Hero* are usually not tied to a specific time but set into a chronologically undefined past. The world Campbell refers to is one of magic and of supernatural wonders, all of which are symbols of what is going on in one's unconscious. This disconnection from the real world also applies to those cases of popular culture inspired by *The Hero*. After all, *Star Wars* is set a "long time ago in a galaxy far, far away"¹⁹ and, for all its technological gadgetry, its plot ultimately revolves around the supernatural Force.

Now, how can a monomythical motif that is to be understood symbolic, placed into a dream-like world and supposed to promote one's spiritual development be transformed into one to be understood literally, placed into the real world and supposed to advance a political agenda? It is here that Jung comes in with his writings on modern myth. Especially his late work on the alleged UFO sightings throughout the 1950s is relevant here. In brief, Jung highlights that the Flying Saucers resemble the *mandala* symbol found in Eastern religions. For Jung, the *mandala* represents a person's wholesome and meaningful Self – in other words, it is about one's spiritual development once again. However, those who claimed that UFOs existed did not perceive them as psychological and/or metaphysical symbols but, rather, as real objects. According to popular scientific and Hollywood lore, they were actually spacecrafts driven by visitors from other planets. Jung identifies here a major example of myth as compensation: In a world divided between two hostile ideological blocs and

¹⁹ Henderson, op. cit., p. 16.

threatened by atomic annihilation, there was a widespread psychological need for the wholeness symbolized by the *mandala*. But as natural science had displaced beliefs in supernatural beings, what had been a metaphysical symbol was now projected upon the external world in the shape of technological objects seemingly explainable through scientific means.²⁰

The interpretation of the UFOs as instances of extraterrestrial technology was popularized through pseudo-science and Science Fiction – that is, the same media which Donnelly had used. Just as under the hands of UFOlogists the *mandala* symbol becomes an alien spacecraft, Donnelly projects the monomythical motifs upon the external world and thereby transforms them into something modern-looking: The Hero becomes the political and social reformer while the Cosmogonic Cycle turns into a series of geological and astronomical impacts. And if the UFO sighters feel disturbed about the Cold War and hope for saviours from outer space, Donnelly and his audience likewise need a compensatory vision. Originally, the Hero's Journey and the Cosmogonic Cycle symbolize an individual's re-connection with the unconscious, thereby overcoming a spiritual imbalance rooted in a too strong emphasis upon Ego consciousness. Now, in their transformed versions – the adventures of the political reformer and the cleansing effects of the world-wide catastrophe – these monomythical motifs are imagined as overcoming the political and economic imbalances created by oligopolistic capitalism. Thus, the writings of Donnelly represent both the Monomyth as identified by Campbell and a modern myth as conceptualized by Jung.

Conclusion

Whatever Campbell's merit for anthropology or literary criticism today, he surely remains of relevance for interpreting popular culture. As this article has tried to demonstrate, the cases of popular culture that can be read in terms of Campbell's Monomyth are not restricted to, say, contemporary *Star Wars* movies or superhero cartoons. Indeed, the amateur scientific and novelistic writings by Donnelly provide an example of an employment of the Monomyth decades before Campbell academically discussed it. Furthermore, they show that the Monomyth can also be transformed into a part of a modern myth on the lines of Jung's interpretation of the UFO phenomenon. While it is a simplification to label Campbell a Jungian, there is no doubt that Jung was one of the major intellectual influences upon his work, including the seminal *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Thus, even though Jung's and Campbell's frameworks do not completely match, it nevertheless appears to be fruitful to reinterpret the latter along the lines of the former.

²⁰ Carl Gustav Jung, *Ein moderner Mythos: Von Dingen, die am Himmel gesehen werden*, Zurich and Stuttgart: Rascher, 1958; cf. Steven F. Walker, *Jung and the Jungians on Myth: An Introduction* (2002), London and New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 97–100.

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Disclosure of Interest

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